

## Amendments to the Claims

1. *(Currently Amended)* A method of forming electrical connection means electrical connections on a substrate, comprising the following steps:
  - a) depositing an intermediate layer of material [[(14)]] on a substrate,
  - b) forming an etching mask [[(16)]] on the intermediate layer [[(14)]], said mask having at least one window [[(18)]] having dimensions which are larger than the dimensions envisaged for the connection means electrical connections to be realized,
  - c) etching the intermediate layer of material [[(14)]] through the window [[(18)]] of the mask in order to form therein at least one aperture [[(20)]], having lateral side-walls, for receiving the connection means electrical connections,
  - d) coating the lateral side-walls of the aperture with a spacer [[(22)]] in order to narrow the aperture,
  - e) depositing at least one conductor material [[(24)]] so as to fill the narrowed aperture, and
  - f) performing an abrasion operation in order to remove excess conductor material outside the narrowed aperture.
2. *(Currently Amended)* A method as claimed in claim 1, in which the step a) utilizes a dielectric material for forming the intermediate layer [[(14)]] while a metallic conductor material [[(24)]] is used in the step e).
3. *(Currently Amended)* A method as claimed ~~in one of the claims 1 or 2, in claim 1~~, in which the step d) comprises the deposition of a layer [[(22)]] of an insulating coating material, followed by the anisotropic etching of this layer so as to preserve a part thereof on the side-walls of the aperture [[(20)]].
4. *(Currently Amended)* A method as claimed ~~in one of the claims 1 to 3, in claim 1~~, in which the side-walls of the aperture [[(20)]] are coated by means of a dielectric material having a low dielectric constant (k).

5. (*Currently Amended*) A method as claimed in claim 4, in which the dielectric material of the coating layer [[(22)]] is chosen from among fluorous glass, glass deposited by spinning and silicon oxide containing carbon.

6. (*Currently Amended*) A method as claimed ~~in one of the claims 1 to 5, in claim 1,~~ in which the window of the mask [[(18)]] registers with at least one active part [[(12)]] of the substrate, and in which said active part [[(12)]] of the substrate is exposed during the etching of the intermediate layer of material [[(14)]] through the window [[(18)]] of the mask.

7. (*Currently Amended*) A method as claimed ~~in one of the claims 1 to 6, in claim 1,~~ in which apertures [[(18)]] are etched which extend right through the intermediate layer [[(14)]].

8. (*Currently Amended*) A method as claimed ~~in one of the claims 1 to 7, in claim 1,~~ in which the mask [[(16)]] is formed by means of a photolithography technique, and in which the narrowed apertures [[(20)]] have dimensions (d) which are referred to as "ultimate" dimensions which are smaller than those that can be achieved by means of said photolithography technique.

9. (*Currently Amended*) A method as claimed ~~in one of the claims 1 to 8, in claim 1,~~ in which the ~~connection means~~ electrical connections comprise wiring tracks and/or terminals and/or vias between layers.

10. (*Currently Amended*) An integrated circuit device which comprises ~~connection means~~ electrical connections [[(30)]] which are embedded in apertures [[(20)]] of an intermediate layer [[(14)]] which is flush with an edge of the apertures, said apertures [[(20)]] having side-walls coated with insulating lateral spacers [[(22)]], ~~and is realized by means of the method disclosed in one of the claims 1 to 9~~—the integrated circuit device realized by the method as recited in claim 1.

11. (*Currently Amended*) A device as claimed in claim 10, in which the spacers [(22)] are made of a dielectric material having a low dielectric constant.

12. (*Currently Amended*) A device as claimed ~~in one of the claims 10 or 11, in claim 10,~~ in which the ~~connection means~~ electrical connections comprise wiring tracks and/or contact pads and/or vias between layers and have at least one dimension which is smaller than 0.1  $\mu$ m.

13. (*Currently Amended*) An electrical or electronic device, wireless or not, comprising at least one integrated circuit device as claimed ~~in one of the claims 10 to 12, in claim 10.~~